

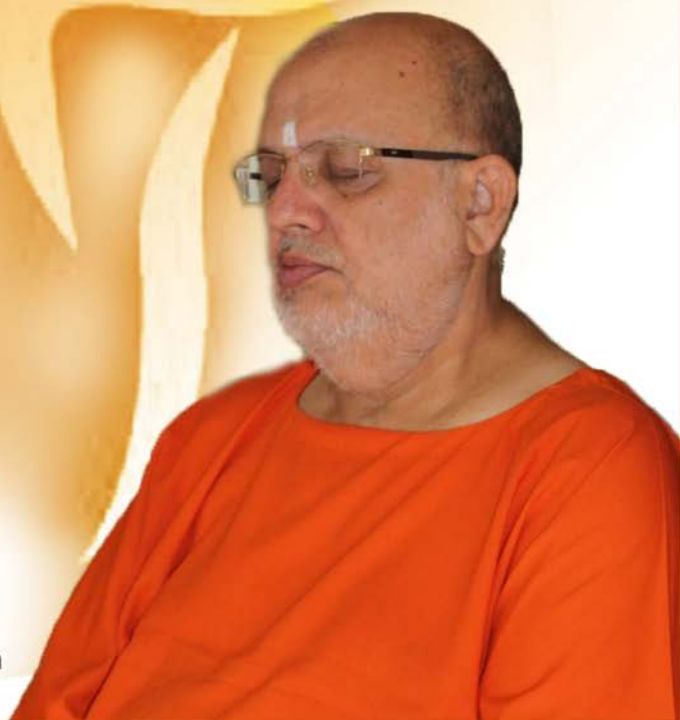
VEDANTA ARTICLES

H. H. Swami Atmananda Saraswati

Part : 2

अहं
ब्रह्मास्मि

Published by:
International Vedanta Mission
www.vmission.org.in





Vedanta Ashram, Indore

Contact : Mb 7000361938

Email : vmission@gmail.com

Visit : www.vmission.org.in

CONTENTS

01 - 09

Shreyas
and Preyas

Holistic Approach
in Sadhana

10 - 18

19 - 35

Vyashti
& Samashti

From Action
to Actionlessness

36 - 42

43 - 55

Five
Niyama's

Five
Yama's

56 - 69

70 - 83

Ego,
the False Me

Para &
Apara Vidya's

84 - 96

97 - 108

Om based
Meditation

Realizing & Assimilating
Ignorance

109 - 138

HOLISTIC APPROACH IN SADHANA

Life is one :

Sarvam khalvidam Brahma thunder the Upanishads. Everything is Brahman alone. It is one divinity alone which is manifesting in multifarious ways. He who realises this transcendental divinity as his own Self exudes its fragrance at all his or her levels of personality. Whether it

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

is the experience of the ever-existent, self-effulgent joy at the level of mind, the vision of all-pervasiveness of oneself, the realisation of the fact that the Self alone is the real essence behind every process of creation etc, whether it is acting with a motivation of pure love, or it is the natural revealing of divine qualities - the stitha pragnya - the man of true knowledge, very naturally exhibits it all. This has to be very obvious because afterall it is one divinity alone expressing in various ways.

A man of knowledge does not have to be all, but discover himself to be all. During the time of his sadhana he does aligns & integrates all his faculties to facilitate the realisation of this one non-dual re-

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

ality, but later just discovers himself to be all, even at the level of creation outside. He discovers himself to be in the chirping birds, in the smiling flowers, in the rising sun, in the wafting winds or in the flowing waters of streams. All are manifestation of one eternal life - which he knows to be his real essence. The thrust of his sadhana is only to rectify the errors which were erroneously brought about at the various levels of his personality. As ignorance also has pervaded at all our levels so a concerted effort is called for to tackle the problem in a holistic way.

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

Integral approach to sadhana :

Strangely enough a fallacious idea about sadhana is prevalent that there are different paths to the realisation of truth. The so called Gyana Marg, Bhakti Marg, the path of Karma, Raja Yoga etc. All sadhanas have a role to play. All of them are directed at completely different levels of our personlity. Physical well being and intelligent mind are not alternates to choose from. Both are important. We have balanced food, multifaceted education so also has to be the approach in ones sadhana. There has to be very clear viveka between end & means. Just as before undertaking any journey we are firstly

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

clear about the nature of our goal and the available means to attain it, so also before undertaking any sadhana it is extremely necessary that we are clear about some fundamentals.

Like a specialist one should first discern the real problem and the means to handle that problem. There is something called the real means and secondary means. That which is the real means eliminates the real problem, while that which is the secondary means helps us to get prepared for eliminating the real problem. What is our real problem ? It is a sense of limitation, conditionings of time & space. As this is not natural to us there is an intrinsic motiva-

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

tion to be free from this limitation. The pangs of finitude are eliminated only by awakening to the infinite. The possibility and the methodology of this awakening is revealed in the Upanishads. They provide us the whole map of this unique journey. Luckily infinite is something which unlike finite things is present at all places and times. It is right here & now. It pervades everything, every pore, every cell, every gene, every thought and every emotion. It is our very being. Just as water pervades all waves & ripples so also everything is already pervaded by this eternal truth. That which is already present but is just not known needs no action for its attainment. It just has to be known. Action

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

is a means to attain something unattained or maybe change that which is attained. None of this is applicable here. Knowledge alone brings about its so called attainment. There can be no other paths than this. Self-realisation is the only way to God-realisation. But in order to bring about this realisation we have to prepare our mind. We need a particular kind of mind for every kind of knowledge. For Self-knowledge we need a mind which is highly intelligent, at peace with itself, fully integrated, sensitive, simple yet very dynamic, daring & fearless. To bring about such a mind we have to use various sadhanas. There has to be an integral approach to sadhana.

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

Role of different sadhanas :

Bhakti plays an important role to make a person sensitive, selfless & loving. Such a person doesn't have any ego-centric problems. He is at peace with himself, and has various good divine qualities. The role of karma is to help purge various vasanas. They are lingering impressions of our various past experiences prompting their repetition. The role of Yoga is to help bring about a physical well-being, equanimity, concentration & integration in the mind. It gives us the ability to switch off the mind and turn intensely in any direction you like. The role of gyana is to understand the truth

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SADHANA

of oneself. Who am I ? What is this world ? How has it come about ? etc. Vratas help bring about greater will-power etc. Every sadhana has a definite role to play, and all are directed at a different level all together. None of them is an alternate for the other. So the ideal plan should be to give time for some studies, practice Yoga, invoke devotion and also learn to actively & positively do your karmas. Texts like Bhagwad Gita are no super markets which have different stalls for different sadhakas. It offers a holistic approach to sadhana to help bring about the integration of all our faculties at the earliest. Thereafter it is just the realisation of the infinite truth. Aham Brahmasmi.

SHREYAS AND PREYAS

The Kathopanishad says that every person will always get the option of treading the path of that which is right & good – the Sreyas, or succumb to the path of immediate pleasure – the Preyas. Those who choose the path of Sreyas will make the best of their lives, while those to succumb to the latter will have to pay the price destined for the deluded ones.

SHREYAS & PREYAS

To say that everything is predestined is to over simplify the matters of life, and that also wrongly. We have to realise the nature of our freedom, and the options which are available to us in every situation. Whatever situation is got in the present moment is certainly the result of all past actions put together, and to that extent we can certainly say that this present moment was destined to come, but that does not mean that everything has already been written by someone else sitting somewhere. Our real freedom is in the nature of response we give. We have the freedom to respond, not to respond, respond in the old way or try something new. It is this basic freedom about which awareness should be brought about, and about which appropriate preparations should be made.

SHREYAS & PREYAS

While responding to a situation there are various parameters in operation. What is the 'real' goal for which we are working, and, what is the state of mind with which we are disposed – are two very important aspects which play a very very profound role to chalk out the nature of things to come. The term 'real' goal implies existence of an understanding that even though we appear to be planning & working for different things we do have some ultimate goal for which we are working. Lot of thought needs to be put for this, because our whole life & efforts are guided by our goals. Understanding of the real goal requires a great deal of understanding, and that is when the necessity of philosophy is realised. To that extent

SHREYAS & PREYAS

every one has to become a philosopher. Philosophy is not luxury of few, it is a necessity for one & all. It stands for deep understanding of life in a very holistic & thorough way. This understanding encompasses fundamental questions about : Who am I ? What is this world ? How has it come about ? What is the real problem of man – bondage ? What is the way to be free from it – the liberation ? How is this world run ? How do situations come? What is really in the hands of a man ? What is the uniqueness or potential of man ? Each of these questions directly effect our lives very profoundly, and therefore should be gone into with due seriousness. Conscious or unconscious all our perceptions and understanding effect us very pro-

SHREYAS & PREYAS

foundly. Those who are conscious of them have to freedom to change them – because they are basically their own understanding, and those who are not conscious of these self-created power-points they keep on dancing to their tunes and suffer - helplessly. Our understanding of life in fact draws a circle in which we keep living for all times to come, till ofcourse we change the diameter of that circle or even remove these self-imposed boundaries all together. We have the freedom to do all this, and that is what the compendium of the knowledge of life - the Vedanta, is all about.

The moment we fix an extraneous goal for our self, then that very moment we accept various fundamental facts of life. When we think that

SHREYAS & PREYAS

our fulfillment lies in some object or achievement yonder then we in effect say that 'I am basically a lacking being' and 'I have to do something to be fulfilled'. All these presumptions are completely baseless and do not stand any enquiry. The fact is that – 'that' which constantly manifests as 'I' in our bosoms is an infinite, transcendental, self-fulgent & blissful existence, and the 'means of knowledge' of this is deep enquiry & contemplation of the basis of Vedanta. Sravana, Manana & Niddhidhyasana of Vedantic scriptures is the Prama of the knowledge of Truth of life. Vedanta not only reveals truth about us but also about the whole perceptible world. Everything thing which is perceptible is in the realm of time, and is there-



SHREYAS & PREYAS

fore changing & ephemeral. This is an extremely evident fact and really speaking requires no logical validation. Thus when we keep an extraneous goal then we simultaneously affirm our presumptions that I am a limited & lacking person and the world outside is permanent and capable of giving me that which I lack. When our life will be based on these untruths then how can we ever expect to awake to a state of cherished fulfillment & contentment.

The ideal way to live has to be one which is based on the facts of life. The fact is that I am fulfilled and the world has nothing to offer to me. Action is only meant to help us serve & give. This alone should be our fundamental motivation – loving-

SHREYAS & PREYAS

ly serve everyone, selflessly, no expectations even of gratitude. Our service should be as natural & effortless as is the fragrance of a flower. There should be no doership involved. This is what the path of Sreyas is all about. Let any situation come, never let a sense of lack, craving or dependence enter your mind. Even if you do not know these facts directly then also it is worth believing. Holding your head high, with a loving heart, and an enthusiastic disposition work on selflessly, for the good of all around. Love is a strange thing : it increases only on giving. The path of Preyas, on the other hand is one of delusion & untruths. We can certainly get an object of our enjoyment and seem to get fulfilled, but soon enough the life itself will

SHREYAS & PREYAS

start revealing that there has been a fundamental error somewhere. Lord Krishna says in Bhagwad Gita that 'Know that to be rajasic joy where there is pleasure in the beginning and lots of pains thereafter'. It is like a diabetic eating sweets. It will be pleasurable no doubt, but the negative consequences will soon follow. To tread the path of Sreyas is to remain awake all the time, then alone one will never stumble & get hurt. So let us exercise our freedom and tread a path which may appear slightly painful in the beginning but ultimately which alone is the way to real fulfillment.

FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

Action is signature of life :

Action is verily a signature of life. Life manifests most vividly in the form of actions. If the very life principle is said to be the eternal divinity then its manifestation in the form of action is indeed its divine fragrance. To



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

be able to act is indeed a blessing, and anyone who acts in a dynamic, creative way out of the feeling of well being for all becomes a blessing for all those around him, and paves the path for his total fulfillment too. Any philosophy of life which gives due importance to action alone facilitates people to make the best of their lives and vice versa any philosophy which professes an inactive life becomes responsible for the fall of that person, society or the nation. So act we must. We must in fact learn more about this potent thing called action. We must know the potential and also the limitations of action.



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

Act to forge ahead, react to be left behind :

First let us try to understand what exactly is an action ? Any movement of our hands or bodies is not an action. A person turning in his bed while sleeping drops a glass and in the process makes a thief to run away is not said to have performed an action, nor does a person reacting to a situation as per his conditionings is performing any action. Action is one thing and reaction is another. Action is a deliberate & conscious effort done with a definite objective in mind. If unconsciously you help someone



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

you have not done any Punya karma, similarly if unintentionally if you harm someone you don't commit any sin. That is ofcourse a different matter that a sensitive person sees to it that even unconsciously he or she does not harm any one. Animals are programmed to respond in a particular way and therefore they do not perform any actions. In action there is freedom to choose our response. I may decide my response on the basis of my past experiences or may try out something entirely new. I may respond or may not respond at all. That's freedom. In action there is freedom. In action there is growth and also evolution. Those who don't know what does action actually means



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

simply stagnate. A person who constantly exercises his or her freedom in & through every situation alone acts. Very few people act, most of us merely react. Those who act alone go ahead, rest are left behind.

The potential of action :

In all actions there has to be a clearly defined goal. Greater the clarity of goal, greater will be our energy directed towards it. But, a total action requires something more, there should also be great sensitivity towards others. A deliberate act which is done with such a sensitivity to others as you would expect others to have toward



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

you is called a *Punya karma* or virtuous action, while a *karma* in which in the process of attaining our goals there is total indifference towards others feelings then such an act is called *Paap* or sin. A person who does *punya karma's* not only begets love, consideration & respect of others but also facilitates manifestation of his various latent qualities & potentials. This leads to still better *karma's* and the cyclic effect leads one to still greater prosperity, contentment and betterment of life. On the other hand if a person is too desperate to attain something and in the process resorts to insensitivity & the subsequent *Paap karma's* then his selfish disposition not only ultimately isolates him but the over-



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

loaded mind also cannot bring about its best. Success for such a person is always questionable, and even if success is brought about then also the cost at times is so high and the person inspite of getting what he wants remains a loser. The potential of Punya karma's is great, they can help us attain even the glories & comforts of heavens. So act we must but in a more conscientious way.

The greatest potential of action :

Apart from the above potential there is one more extremely important and great potential of action, which is not so often talked about.



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

That potential pertains to the effect of karma's on our minds rather than its potential in bringing about the desired situation outside. It is the ability of karma to make the mind of a person progressively all the more intelligent, sensitive & strong. The utilization of that potential does not call for any special act, in fact whatever may be the field of action of a person, in & through his or her activities the above objective can also be simultaneously attained. The change is only in the motivation. The usual motivation in any action is in bringing about a desired extraneous situation. We want something and work for it. Our love lies in some object yonder, and action is merely a means to attain that. Our joys



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

manifest on seeing the results and not earlier. In other words we don't enjoy the very act of doing some thing but always look beyond to something which is yet to come. People who are more bothered about the 'fruits' of action, the very act of doing something is more often a burden, and is left at the earliest opportunity. The very act is never be a matter of great love or joy. If however for a person the very act of doing something becomes a matter of great challenge, love & joy, if somehow the focus is shifted from the fruits of action which always lies in future, to the 'very act' being done in the present, then with such a changed perspective & priority not only the fruits of action will



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

certainly be far better, but at the same time with this intense living in the present the mind starts unfolding its various latent qualities and the person is seen to become all the more efficient, intelligent, sensitive and strong.

The Nishkama Karma :

Do have goals for the future but not at the cost of potential joys at present. Such an act is possible only by people who have an intrinsic sense of well-being, fulfillment & contentment within themselves. It is such people alone who can afford to act in such a way. They may have great faith in God - the dispenser of all



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

fruits of actions, or their philosophy of life may convince them of their basic divinity. Whatever be the case if they can afford to act with the above motivation then they open the floodgates of their higher growth & evolution. Such a karma where having once discerned the goal, the entire attention & love is in the very act of doing the karma, and in & through his actions is amazed at the beauty & order of things around becoming in his heart a fan, rather a devotee of one who runs the entire show, is called as the Nishkama karma. Every act of this person is an act of love, in every conceivable way. These people enjoy their very work and are never bother about retirement, the day when they



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

will probably be free of all this hassle. A person who inculcates such an attitude in & through all his or her actions is called as a Karma Yogi. Lord Krishna never feels tired to glorify such an act or such a person. Such an act is ones doorway to total freedom. Not only doorway to freedom, it verily is an act of freedom.

The limitations of action :

As the saying goes there are always two sides of any coin. Even though karma's can take us to the mind boggling heights of heavenly pleasures, they can help bring about beautiful virtues in the mind, they can bring about great purity



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

of mind in the form of detachment, contemplativeness & sensitivity, yet karma's have some limitations. The greatest limitation of action is that any thing attained through any of our acts is always transient, it is in the realm of change and thus perishable. No fruits of actions are permanent, no situation is permanent. All what we attain through karma's quickly becomes an object of our memories. Karma is not a means to help attain any thing permanent. If at any point in time we aspire for something permanent then this great & potent thing called karma stands helpless. Luckily that which is permanent should by its very definition be present at all times and places, and therefore has to be



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

present right here & now. Such a thing which is already attained needs no karma but merely some deeper awareness, knowledge. Basically karma's have a role to play whenever we want to produce, modify, purify or attain something. If this is the goal then karma alone has to be the means, there is no other way, but in cases where there is no production, modification, purification or attainment involved then karma's have no role to play. A person who wants to know his Self or wants to know the truth of things around, then karma's have no role to play. The basic essence of everyone, the Atma is declared by the great Rishis of Upanishads as ever-pure, ever-attained and free from the possibility or



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

necessity of any modification. It is that which is permanent, divine and also embodiment of joy. Atma is something to be known and not attained, for the simple reason that it is our very Self. If we want to know the Self, then we should not only keep aside all karma's but for a time being even quieten the habitual tendency to act. At such a moment this habit to act becomes a positive nuisance.

The plan of action :

The plan of action thus suggested by scriptures is to first learn to act - deliberately, consciously & later in a Nishkama way, selflessly, lov-



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

ingly. Having fulfilled our various desires & responsibilities and having brought about the necessary purity of mind, turn your attention to that which is permanent. When such a goal becomes dear then don't let even this tendency to act turn your attention to any thing extraneous. Such people should go to their Sat-guru - men of knowledge pertaining to such things, and try to know that which is here & now. Know your Self, that which you always are and always was. Having known your true, divine Self directly, let your fulfillment manifests at all the levels of your personality. Such people have nothing to attain for themselves, their account has been settled, they live to serve. Such people



FROM ACTION TO ACTIONLESSNESS

act yet they don't. Let people call their acts in what ever way they like, they live spontaneously, exuding the divine fragrance of divinity & love all around them without any barriers of caste, creed, sex, nationality or even religions. They truly become a world citizen.



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI



World is one, but everything in it can be looked at from two levels. The individual & the cosmic. The individual level is called 'Vyashti' and the cosmic is referred to by the word 'Samashti'. Both of these pertain to the micro and the macrocosm respectively. The consequences of identifying with either of the level is very different, because in the center of vyashti vision

VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

stands the concerns of an individual, while in the center of samashti vision stands the compassion & welfare of all.

Individual view brings about selfishness and all its subsequent problems. Even though every person has some fundamental responsibilities towards him or herself, but that alone should never be the sole objective of life. Everyone should take care of one's basic necessities, but even to fulfill these objectives one has to look beyond oneself – to begin with towards one's family and later toward's the society as a whole too. Any person who is obsessed with his or himself so much that he doesn't have anytime



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

even for the family around is always a potential danger, they are demons in the making. Such people look at their children & other relatives too as pawns to be used for their own selfish ends. They have no love in their hearts, or rather do not know the real meaning of love. Their life is dry and lonely, and inspite of their obsessive & blinding concerns for themselves they do not satisfactorily fulfill even those objectives for which they are so concerned about. They definitely seem to be on the wrong path.

The Cosmic view on the other hand brings about love for all. A person sensitive to others alone has a heart full of love & peace. Such a



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

person is also obliged to take care of his basic needs, but this is never an issue for him. He has a large family who are equally sensitive to his needs. Man is a social being, and therefore can never even think of living an isolated life. If this is so then any tendency to be insensitive to others is contradictory to the very structure of social order. The essence of Dharma is to be sensitive to others. A virtuous act is defined as that wherein a person does unto others as he expects others to do unto him. This is possible only because of his high degree of sensitivity & love for everyone around. Person of such a disposition is a indeed a godly person.



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

Thus vyashti & samashti are two ways of looking at the world, and it should be a sincere endeavor of everyone to slowly expand his or her vision so as to embrace more & more people. However, one thing should also be understood that even though the cosmic view brings about relatively greater virtues, love & peace, but this cosmic view also is not the absolute view. The very usage of these words together shows their relativity, meaning both are inter-dependent, and require the existence of the other for its own existence & identity. Totality implies the sum total of all individuals, and individual is a unit of total. This division comes into existence only after we identify with our body-mind-in-



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

tellect(BMI) complex, and thus bring about an identity which is different from the whole. Existence in a relative dimension is always fraught with limitation & dependence, and thus there will always be absence of total satisfaction. The redemption is only by directly knowing that which is absolute.

In order to know that which is absolute one should discover an identity which transcends and yet pervades the existing identity of one being this BMI complex. Taking resort to the precepts of Vedanta one should learn the art of dissociating oneself from this complex and then realising that which exists thereafter. By awak-



VYASHTI & SAMASHTI

ening to that which is absolute, one experiences that which is referred to by the phrase 'peace that passeth all under-standing' - the nectarine ambrosia which quenches the thirst of the heart. Thus one should start on a journey to first having a cosmic view, and then alone work to awake to the one non-dual absolute truth. A person having samashti drishti alone is qualified to go into the secrets of the knowledge of Vedanta which reveals to us the absolute truth. So do undertake the divine journey from vyashti to samashti and then to the absolute. Bon Voyage.



FIVE YAMA'S

The Ashtanga Yoga Sutra's of Maharshi Patanjali is now seen with great reverence throughout the world for its scholarly, objective and intensive study of the mind, aiming to help us quieten the ever vacillating mind. Thanks to the worldwide acceptance of sadhana's like asana, pranayama and dhyana. People

FIVE YAMA'S

are getting nicely benefited with these sadhana's not only to gain good health but also by helping us get a stress-free & positive mind. However, it should be noted that no medication is ever beneficial if the patient is selective in a prescription provided to us by a learned man. We need to respect the entire prescription which has been so thoughtfully suggested to us by a doctor. So also here, we need to respect the entire package suggested by the great wise man to get the best of our mind, and more importantly, follow the right sequence too.

Ashtanga Yoga, literally means, the eight limbs of Yoga. These are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pra-



FIVE YAMA'S

nayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and finally the Samadhi. We need to note that the prescription starts with suggestion to follow, or rather, inculcate the Five Yama's. Yama's are those qualities which help us to naturally quieten the mind. A person who has not given due attention and importance to yama, but directly jumps to the limbs of asana, pranayama or dhyana, is like a person who keeps the fire on and then keeps on putting effort to stop the water from boiling. Yes, the five yama's are such qualities which target the very roots of a disturbed mind, and thus help us to get a quiet & positive mind merely by our vision of life. The absence of these qualities is in fact the cause for



FIVE YAMA'S

all the vacillations & disturbances of the mind. There is a cause of a disturbed mind and then there are the effects of a disturbed mind. Yama & Niyama target the very roots of a disturbed mind, while asana, pranayama etc help us to reduce the effects of a disturbed mind. So they need to be highly respected, understood, and first assimilated, much more than immediately jumping into the bandwagon of asana etc. That way alone we get the appropriate and lasting benefit as assured by the Maharshi.

The Five Yama's are Ahimsa, Satyam, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. We shall briefly see the meaning of these five Yama's :



FIVE YAMA'S

1. Ahimsa : Absence of ill-will towards all those who even cause us harm or hurt. This quality is a result of our understanding & philosophy of life. We appreciate that basically everyone is good & divine, but it is some extraneous factor because of which a person becomes bad or violent, such people need our help more than our violent & thoughtless reaction. It is greater love, consideration & thoughtfulness which helps to efface the problems of others. This does not however, mean that we need not be firm or even use arms. But it implies that using of arms will be the last resort to handle the thoughtlessness of others, and such an action too will be undertaken only for the greater well-being



FIVE YAMA'S

of all. Ahimsa is basically a motivation to help and bring about the well-being of all.

2. Satyam : Satyam is Truthfulness. Truthfulness implies that we the presentation of facts by us should be as per our knowledge within. There should be no split in the personality, that inside I am something and outside I am something else. Satyam reveals an integrated and transparent mind & personality. We should always desist from the temptation of presenting a false facts even in the possibility of getting some gains outside; because if falsehood is likely to bring any particular benefit, it also kills our sensitivity to enjoy a particular



FIVE YAMA'S

situation. A split mind is a sure shot insurance to pain, grief, stress and ill-health, apart from our inability to live as per our convictions. Our wisdom becomes futile. It becomes unavailable, and we are compelled to live just the opposite of what we believe to be right & good. So one must never resort to lies & falsehood, irrespective of the possible gains. If at all we think that the truth we know is not worthy of being spoken, then we always have the freedom to remain quiet or speak diplomatically, but one must always make it a point never to speak lies, and thus pave the path to a split personality and the subsequent disasters.



FIVE YAMA'S

3. Asteya : Non-stealing. Every self-respecting man should learn to live as per his or her karma. We need to be satisfied with what we have earned with our hard work, and also respect the hard work of others. That for which I have not done any karma, should never be taken without the permission of the owner. It is not mine so I have no right on it, even if it is lying right in front of me with no one around. We always have the freedom to work hard for whatever we want, and if at all there is something which we need, then we need to take permission of the owner to even use it. In fact contrary to stealing one should rather feel highly indebted on receiving anything for which I have not done

FIVE YAMA'S

any work. One should feel hesitant to accept any such things, and if at all we do become a recipient of the magnanimity of someone, then there needs to be profound gratitude towards that person, and appropriate gestures are expected to express our gratitude. This quality is not only a mark of our culture but is an expression of our belief in the law of karma. It brings about self-respect, hard-work, contentment, respect of the property rights of others, and thus in totality a very positive & peaceful mind.

4. Brahmacharya : Brahmacharya means to live as a master and not a slave of our sens-



FIVE YAMA'S

es. It implies the existence of wisdom wherein one has gone into and understood the secret of happiness & sorrow. Such people understand about the real source of happiness & bliss. The word meaning of Brahmacharya in fact implies constant reveling in Brahman, the ultimate subjective truth of all. However, such a person who knows about the secret of real happiness, is also aware of the role & importance of sensual pleasures, and thus works for the good health of their body, senses & even the mind. The scriptures even teach the art of love to such healthy & wise people, who learn to look upon all sensual pleasures etc in right perspective and even know the art & science to make the best



FIVE YAMA'S

of it. They are not so much obsessed, brain-washed or hypnotized by the sensual pleasures outside that they lose all their wisdom, but rather retain the cap of their wisdom to live a thoughtful, intelligent & happy life. Absence of Brahmacharya is one of the most prevalent cause of suppressions, repressions, complexes, ill-health and pains of so many people. It is also the cause of so many ills of the society at large.

5. Aparigraha : Absence of accumulation of more than what we need. We live in a big, beautiful & great world, which is being managed by none other than the omniscient & omnipotent God himself. We are never alone, are



FIVE YAMA'S

where we may be we are always being taken care of by God, by providing us necessary water, wind and what not. SO there should be no need to accumulate too much wealth etc.. Only the insecure ones resort to such tendencies, and greater is the sense of insecurity greater will be the wish to accumulate all that which makes us secure. With such a deep rooted insecurity within who can help make such people truly happy & free. As long as this isolating & limiting perception is there resulting in resorting to accumulation then such people can never even dream of happiness and real security. greater the accumulation, greater will be their insecurity and isolation and thus the pangs of



FIVE YAMA'S

limitations. Moreover, in their baseless feeling of insecurity, they even snatch what is the due of others, and thus in the long run such people and tendencies alone are responsible for the various social and even law & order problems every where. Only the strong, secure, and the truly self-reliant ones need not resort to such tendencies. If such a personality is our goal, then this value too should be very dear to us.





FIVE NIYAMA'S

Niyama's are those values for which we need to daily put some effort to assure their inculcation and assimilation. These values need to be so deep-rooted in us that they become part of our personality. While five yama's too are such values which need to become part of our personality, the difference between the two

FIVE NIYAMA'S

is in the nature of these values. While the five yama's relate more with our social interaction, the five niyama's relate more with our personal life & outlook. Moreover, there is an underlying implication that necessary efforts need to be put on a daily basis for the inculcation and assimilation of these personal traits & values.

Before we go into these five niyama's one should realize the importance of regular, or rather daily exposure to certain values & qualities. They need to be seen as important & fundamental disciplines for the flowering of our personality. Initially mind gets its direction and values by convincing & powerful impressions. It is



FIVE NIYAMA'S

only later that one can think, analyze & decide about any particular values or principles of life. That is why there is necessity of good company or satsang. Mind is very impressionable, so one should make it a point to bring about positive impressions in it. We need to work deliberately, sincerely and real hard for qualities which will facilitate bringing of a free, and enlightened mind. With this background we will now see what are these five niyama's.

The Five Niyama's are Shauch, Santosh, Tapa, Swadhyaya and Ishwar-Pranidhana. We shall now briefly see the meaning and importance of these five Niyama's :



FIVE NIYAMA'S

1. Shauch : Shauch means Cleanliness. This niyama validates the prevalent saying that 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness'. Cleanliness is not only necessary for good health, but also for a good mind. This is suggested at two levels, external & internal. So taking care of ones body & senses properly, having a clean body, mouth & bowels, having clean water & food, clean fresh air, clean place to live, all together contribute to a clean & healthy living. Insensitivity to lack of cleanliness at any levels, will not only become instrumental to various kinds of diseases, but that such a person will also not even be conscious to his or her dirty mind, and



FIVE NIYAMA'S

thus close doors to any process of its purity & evolution.

More important than the external cleanliness is the internal cleanliness. The cleanliness of the mind. Cleanliness of the mind implies a mind which can think, enquire & feel without any conditionings, and thereafter live as per ones conviction. Everyone of us has some likes or dislikes, but when these likes & dislikes become so powerful, then we lose the capacity to even see a thing or a person without reactions, then it amounts to losing our fundamental human quality, and is thus termed as impurity. One needs to protect & preserve ones quality



FIVE NIYAMA'S

& capacity of objective enquiry & thinking at any cost. Purity of intentions, transparency in the personality, pleasantness, truthfulness, all together contribute to a clean mind.

2. Santosh : Santosh means contentment. Contentment is the joy & blessedness of being what you are. It implies the capacity to make the best of your present moment and all what you have, rather than keep craving & thirsting for all that which you dont. Contentment provides foundation for selfless living. A person who is happy in himself alone has the time & disposition to look around and not only see but also enjoy the beauty of all that which is. Such



FIVE NIYAMA'S

a person alone can truly love & serve others. Such a person suddenly has all the time in the world for finer things in life & even self-knowledge, others keep crying for lack of time when it comes to finer things. It is synonymous to peace of mind, which every person is so desperately seeking in the world. Santosh opens a new chapter in our life & perceptions.

However, one needs to understand that santosh should always be with reference to the situations of life and our self, not with reference to karma as such. It is never implied to bring about a disenthused, demotivated & complacent person, but needs to bring about a para-



FIVE NIYAMA'S

digm shift in ones value structure. Rather than living selfishly, one needs to live selflessly, but with equal if not greater enthusiasm & drive. Let no situation deter you, because you have no personal axe to grind, you work to serve, and not for ego-satisfaction. One needs to feel blessed for being what you are, be it being a human being, the highest evolved being on this planet, or just being your unique self. Santosh is a great divine quality, it is the sign of an enlightened person, so one needs to work daily to keep aside ones motivation of selfishness, which is an outcome of a deep sense of lack & insufficiency within, a drive motivated by things like envy, holier than thou, spirit etc.



FIVE NIYAMA'S

3. Tapas : Tapas means austerity. Tapas is a great discipline. It is basically the capacity to grow over our inadvertent habits and replace them deliberately with anything which we deem fit & necessary. Whether it is something to do with our physical necessities, external dependences, routine, requirements of our senses, emotional dependences, mental habits or even intellectual compromises, etc. Anyone who is dependent on anything whatsoever will have to face problems accordingly. Many a times we have this notion and fear that without such and such thing I will have lot of problems and may even die, tapas is an effort to discover that line & limit, crossing which our existence becomes



FIVE NIYAMA'S

truly questionable. Once we see that, then we also see that we were unnecessarily depending on so many things. We start experiencing freedom with the practice of tapas itself.

Tapas may involve sadhana's like dietary changes or even fasting, exposure to hardships, practices like japa, asana, pranayama, etc. We may resolve to give up any habit which has started becoming a dependence. Deliberate & dedicated application of our free-will to do or change anything, not only helps us to be free of so many dependences but also helps brings about inner strength and even self-esteem. Tapas increases will-power, and a person who has



FIVE NIYAMA'S

strong will-power can dare to think of any goal in life. Tapas also helps good health.

4. Swadhyaya : Simply translated the word 'Swadhyaya' means self-study. So daily study of enlightening & inspiring scriptures is swadhyaya. One should regularly keep in touch with scriptures like Upanishads & Bhagwad Gita, which motivate us to work for self-knowledge. They also reveal the ways & means of this great subjective goal. However, it is not merely the study of scriptures which is implied by swadhyaya, but this word also incorporates suggestions for self-analysis & introspection. Self-Knowledge is not about imagining oneself



FIVE NIYAMA'S

to be so & so, but directly seeing the truth of oneself. This being so, one needs to start this process by a re-look at our existing perceptions. Moreover, how we react & respond in a particular situation reveals a lot about our existing notions, priorities & values. So in & through our daily interactions, deep down we keep on objectively watching & studying ourself. So swadhyaya is a two-pronged discipline, one, daily study of the notes of all those who have treaded on this path, and objectively watching & analyzing ourself. One who wants to know alone shall know, so the gates of self-knowledge get opened only to such people.



FIVE NIYAMA'S

5. Ishwar-Pranidhana : Ishwar-Pranidhana means belief, devotion and surrender to God. It is worth remembering that Yoga shastra follows Sankhya darshan to a large extent, but this is one of the points where it clearly differs from Sankhya philosophy, which is basically atheist. One should clearly believe and appreciate the existence of that omniscient & omnipotent intelligent creator of the creation. If there is an effect there has to be a cause. To believe that there can be an effect without a cause is baseless & even unscientific. So there is a pattern, a logic, a reason behind all that which is. One needs to see that even our existence is part of the total plan. Belief in god helps us to discover our role



FIVE NIYAMA'S

in the scheme of things. It helps us to concentrate on that which is discerned to be our role & responsibility. A believer of god is not only free of so many burdens of life, but can see & appreciate the beauty of all that which is. There is profound blessedness in being blessed with such a beautiful life. All problems are seen as our errors by not appreciating the truth of the our self or the world, so that alone becomes the focus of our efforts & sadhana's. Ishwar is not only the creator & sustainer etc of the universe but also represents our goal, so a profound belief and devotion unto him is of profound importance.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

In Mundaka Upanishad, a student named Shaunaka goes to an enlightened sage, Angirasa, and asks a very pertinent & profound question. He asks, 'O glorious one! Please tell me as to knowing what we shall come to know everything.' It was a question about the wish to be enlightened, it was about a deep-rooted

PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

& fundamental wish for omniscience. All wise people pursue knowledge, we invest so much in education, publications, news channels and what not, there are research labs and a continuous ongoing process of higher studies. All this is an indication of the fundamental wish to be knowledgeable.

When some sincere aspirants devotes his or her life in the pursuit of knowledge, of not only the beautiful world around, but also about oneself, then there appears to be a fundamental problem. In the beginning we may start with a broad canvas, but as we proceed, our focus keeps becoming smaller & smaller. Super



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

specialists are experts in a very miniscule part of the whole, and unfortunately all those who have truly worked to even to get that knowledge become very humble. This is because their pursuit of knowledge instead of revealing the ultimate truth of that object, just reveals to them that there are still unfathomed depths & dimensions of the object of their specialization which they are yet to fully know. Every pursuit of knowledge does reveal some aspects of life, but more than that it reveals our ignorance. The world may say that so & so person is very knowledgeable, but that so called learned person humbly knows as to how little he or she knows, and how much there is still left to know.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

No wonder great people like Newton said that all what they have known till now is comparable to just few pebbles on a sea shore. So there is indeed a fundamental problem, if we do not pursue knowledge we anyway shall live in ignorance, and even if we pursue knowledge we still live in ignorance, the only difference is that in the latter case we have come to realize our ignorance. Every such person shall have profound respect for the question of Shaunaka, as to how can a man ever be omniscient. How can we know the truth of everything around. How can we live an enlightened life.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

Angirasa was happy to hear the beautiful question, and started his discourse by classifying the entire spectrum of things to be known into two categories. The Para and the Apara Vidya. Objective of any such classification and categorization is to basically segregate things requiring a different approach. As the Apara Vidya 'objects', and Para Vidya 'object' requires an entirely different approach, so the teacher starts from here. Even though the word meaning of Para and Apara are, Higher & Lower, yet it is noteworthy that the Upanishad says that both of them are worth knowing. The specific name should not imply and demeaning of the so called Lower Knowledge. The objective of the



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

specific words is to indicate that the Para Vidya alone shall fulfill the wish of the student of getting omniscience. Thus it is a relative term with reference to the wish of student in mind. Apara Vidya by itself is not competent to bless us with the desired fulfillment, while Para Vidya alone shall help us attain the desired fulfillment. The reason why Shaunaka inspite of his best efforts could not get the desired fruit of omniscience was that he was unknowingly pursuing Apara Vidya but with the wish to get the fruits of Para Vidya, and thus the frustration.

Apara Vidya encompasses the entire spectrum of 'objects', that is, anything that can be ob-



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

jected by our senses or mind. Anything that can be 'seen' is an object of Apra Vidya. Under this category comes all our worldly knowledge's. Science, arts, commerce, management, technical knowledge's etc. Interestingly the teacher even classifies the knowledge of the Vedas and Vedanga's in this category, because they are also a part of the limited & changing world in front of us. Apra Vidya is worth knowing because of various reasons. One, specialization in any one field of objective world, helps us to serve our society & world better, two, pursuit of knowledge disciplines our mind & intellect, so that we become capable of thinking deeply properly, and last but not the least, this



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

pursuit of Apra Vidya helps us to realize the ephemerality of the objective world, and thus helps us to get qualities of vairagya etc, and also motivates us to look out for something more permanent in this ever changing world. The objective of this categorization is to indicate to us that however much we may know the world outside, but by this pursuit alone we shall never move towards omniscience. Apra Vidya shall help us to make a living, have a dignified & respectable life, have a thoughtful intelligent mind, but never ever hope that you shall move towards omniscience. This is not the way for the fulfillment of such an aspiration.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

The second category of knowledge is the so called Para Vidya, or Higher Knowledge. The teacher says that by Para Vidya is meant 'that knowledge' by which the imperishable is known. So there does exist a definite methodology and tradition to know that which is permanent & imperishable. Here not only the very 'object' of knowledge is very different, but even the approach & methodology is very different too. Here even though the words are used but no words directly define the imperishable. Words are used very dexterously with paradoxes to point the imperishable indirectly through implications. It has been rightly said that 'God defined is God defiled'. The moment



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

we use any word, it in fact limits the object as so & so, and whatever is limited can never be the permanent. Moreover, everything which can be seen is changing, thus the imperishable can never be an object of our knowledge, it is in fact the very subject, the essence of the very knower. So the knower has to know his own self, his own essence, which can never be seen by our senses, because this fellow alone is peeping outside through his window like senses. However, there is a very clear & definite way of knowing this subjective essence. The teacher uses various pointers, like Adrekshyam (not-seen), etc.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

When we go into these pointers in the right way then we do come to realize that divine & imperishable subjective essence. The words like Adrekshyam in fact negates all that which is seen. One needs to keep negating till no objects whatsoever remain in our mind. A mind which is very well awake yet is not objectifying any object, shall know the truth of the very knower easily. However, the catch lies in the word negation. Negation of an object is not merely 'not-being-conscious-of' that object, like we drop the thoughts of all objects when we get tired & want to sleep, or when we are engrossed in some object of our love & interest. Negation is not just 'not-seeing' any objects, it



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

is basically realizing the ephemerality of an object so very clearly that getting or losing that object doesn't bring about any difference in us. Even if the object is in front it doesn't register in our mind. To realize the hollowness of a particular object is to realize the ephemerality (Mithyatvam) of that object. Every object has a role to play in the world, after all god himself has created all the objects, yet, when it comes to awakening to something permanent, then all the objects of the world, no matter how useful they are, are of no use. A sincere aspirant of truth is not only capable to intellectually understand the uselessness of all objects, but is capable of treating the objects accordingly. When



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

no objects, achievements, experiences etc fascinate us, and even if we get them or lose them it makes no difference to us, then alone we have 'negated' them. However, please note that negation is possible only by an highly inspired, intelligent & alert mind, not by a dull & an uninspired one. When all 'objects' are negated, then there is nothing to know outside, and the very duality of 'knower-known' gets redundant and thus falls off, and what remains is the very essence of the knower, the actor who was playing the role of a knower, which is incidentally self-effulgent or self-revealing. So all what we need to learn is the art of negation. The teacher says that know that alone as the imperishable.



PARA & APARA VIDYA'S

So even though the words are used yet they are not used, even though the truth is realized, yet is not known in the worldly sense, wherein there is a knower standing apart from an object and knowing it. I never know the imperishable as an object, but realize it as our very self. A Self from which all the thoughts & even this vast world springs forth.



EGO, THE FALSE ME

Ego is our second hand identity. A relative identity brought about by what people around think about me. Ego is our identity in relation to our position, status, capacities, knowledge, lineage, caste, country, and so on. It has nothing to do with my truth, but is all about what others and subsequently I too,

EGO, THE FALSE ME

think, imagine & project about myself - it is the false me. Ego is therefore always very concerned and bothered about what others say & think about me, because its very existence depends on what others say & think. Others can make or break the ego, because it is their creation.

A child coming into this beautiful world is ignorant about everything, everything is so new. With its wide eyed innocence it stares the people & things around. The child is ignorant not only about the world around but also its own self & existence, about which, however, he is hardly bothered at that time. Child has

EGO, THE FALSE ME

an unconditioned & clean slate, yet his or her wide-eyes reveal that he/she wants to know. The flowing love of his mother, the care, the embrace, the attention, the importance, all begin contributing in the process of the crystallization of his or her identity. The smiles & squirms, the love & hate of people around, all slowly & steadily contribute to the formation of an identity, positive or negative. This relative identity thus formed on the basis of the extraneous experiences & knowledge, is called the ego. Ego is inevitable too, after all, I will be called an Indian if I am born in India. The entire legal system too hovers around these extraneous factors. My family, caste, tradition, etc,

EGO, THE FALSE ME

all are a fact from the worldly point of view, so we will inevitably have an identity viz-a-viz these things.

What others think about me is one thing, and this inevitable identity, as I appear to others, should never be too much of a problem, however that is what it comes to. Almost all the religions of the world motivate us to go beyond this ego-centric existence, because most of the time this 'ego' becomes a synonym of bondage, suffering, seeking and grief. The reason of this is that not knowing our true self, we hang on to this relative identity as our real self. Ignorance brings a void, and it is filled up

EGO, THE FALSE ME

by what is the best available around. It is this ignorance and the subsequent error which is the cause of all our sufferings and not the ego per se. Even God cannot help, if the people around brand him as white or black, north or south, brahmin or kshatriya, right or wrong, etc., and mind you there is no problem in this too. Projections & imaginations never malign the object about which imaginations are being made. The truth remains untainted and unaffected, pure & immaculate. What the truth is, is one thing, but what I see & believe it to be is another. Our joys & sorrows depend on our perceptions are, so what we see is more important than what the truth is. So if we take ourself

EGO, THE FALSE ME

to be this ego, then we certainly have one of the most profound crisis of our life - the identity crisis, which is the cause of all the seeking, envy, imitation, blind following etc. The identity brought about by ego is always limited, it is continuously changing, and this is all very contrary to what our truth is, so we are never at home with all these untruths. We constantly strive to be bigger, greater, happier and so on, and all this just because we have erroneously taken ourself we be this relative, second-hand self.

Once we take ourself to be the ego, there is no breaking the shell of limitation. Whether we at-

EGO, THE FALSE ME

tain the most scintillating pleasures & joys, or get recognition, we remain what we have taken ourself to be, a limited fellow. No pleasure or pain ever helps us to go beyond the imposed limitations. Whether we do some dynamic activity or keep all actions aside, yet we do not transcend the ego with these acts, of pravritti or nivritti. Irrespective of what we seek, sacred or secular, we continue to remain a seeker. The ego can never ever go beyond its suffocating sense of seeking. Ego-fulfillment can never be the way to efface or transcend the ego, it rather makes our abidance in the ego more firm. The more we seek, the more we seem to go further away from our goals, and the desperation and

EGO, THE FALSE ME

pain continues to increase. What is the way out of this mire? Vedanta reveals that we need to enquire and question the very individuality, rather than taking it to be real, and keep building our plans on the edifice of this relative imaginary identity. It is the very knowledge of the truth of ego that liberates us from the ego, rather than some unique or specialized kind of seeking of & by the very fellow which needs to be effaced. Any seeking is only after taking this ego and all its limitations to be real.

Every 'goal' of the ego is a projection of all that which the fellow sees that it doesn't have. Experiencing a sense of limitation, we keep

EGO, THE FALSE ME

the limitless as our goal, which is seen to be something which is far away at some different time or at a different place. Experiencing the sorrow, we project a goal which is an embodiment of joy. The story in short is that, first we imagine things about ourself, and then based on this imaginations, we imagine that which is free of all this, and then pursue that projection (read goal). No wonder we continue to remain a seeker, inspite of all achievements. No effect ever effaces its cause, so also no seeking ever effaces the ego. Interestingly the ego visualizes a goal, has clear notion and understanding about it, and then prays to attain that goal. Whatever we project we may experience, but whatever we

EGO, THE FALSE ME

experience is nothing but our projection. All projections are limited, they are objectified and perceived by the mind. Clearer the goal, clearer is the objectification, and thus we first entertain a notion that we know, and then strangely say that we don't know and also want to know. A person who thinks he knows, knows not, because our real essence is not something which can be imagined or objectified by the mind. The truth is that which this very ego veils by its very existence, just as the imaginary snake veils the proverbial rope. Whoever seeks the truth away from himself is on an endless delusory trip, the so called samsara. When we see all this game clearly, and realize the baselessness

EGO, THE FALSE ME

of such a relative identity and his seeking, then this seeking stops & drops. There is no effort even to stop seeking, it stops at that very moment of realization.

We need to realize that the ego is a second-hand identity about ourself, and thus seeing this trick of the mind, we stop associating ourself with it. We need to stop bothering too much about what others say about me, and become more concerned by what I see and discern about our self. The moment we dissociate from ego, that very moment the ego stops becoming our identity, and that very moment we are free of all its limitations. When the very limitations

EGO, THE FALSE ME

are not there, there is no need to project any goal far beyond the horizon, there is no question of any seeking. All limitations, all seeking's immediately come to an end. It is this realization of the false as the false which frees us, and not any effort of the ego to be free. This is what is meant by the statements of vedanta that it is the knowledge of self which frees us and not any action of the ego.

A simple exercise for you. We may be so & so with reference to people, achievements etc around, but please ask yourself as to 'Who are you' when none of the things outside are present. You, not with reference to things around

EGO, THE FALSE ME

but you by yourself. What is your identity - not relative but absolute. Its indeed a priceless question, which has the capacity to liberate you from all the superimposed limitations & bondages. That alone is true Self-Knowledge.



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE



edanta has been revealing from time immemorial that ignorance alone is the root cause of all pain & grief. It is not the situations and people outside which bring pain & problems, but our ignorance, of not only to find the right way out but also of our own capabilities & capacities, more so about our real identity

REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

and truth. Not knowing something properly gives way to imaginations and mis-apprehensions. Once we know a thing wrongly, then we build up on this erroneous perception with our uncalled for expectations and the subsequent seeking. An imaginary identity, imagines potential about things around, and then pursues its projected dream. Some succeed while the others dont. One gets elated while the other gets despondent, however both the reactions are based on the fulfillment of the whims & fancies of an imaginary baseless identity. Real thirst is never quenched by imaginary waters, so we basically remain what we are, a seeker, who now seeks different things, but seeking



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

nevertheless continues with all its joys & pains.
That in short is the story of life.

The basic cause of the life of all this seemingly endless seeking is the ignorance of the truth, so the Upanishads rightly thunder that 'Gyanat eva tu kaivalyam', Knowledge alone Liberates. The Sanatan Dharma rightly respects & reveres knowledge, men of knowledge, or even the books of knowledge, in fact anything associated with knowledge. That is the hallmark of our ancient tradition. Many sincere aspirants seek knowledge with all their heart & soul. However, this is also a fact that out of the many who seek, only a rare few discover the truth.



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

The Upanishads caution us by telling us that the path of the discovery of truth is indeed like traversing on a razors edge. Out of the various possible impediments in the realization of the truth of oneself or for that matter anything, is the proper realization of the fact that 'I am ignorant and need to know'. Someone rightly said that, 'It is only those who know that they do not know, can ever know'. We never try filling up a cup which is already full, so also a teacher never tries to teach someone who thinks that he or she already knows. It is a sheer wastage of time even discussing matter with people who are conditioned. They are more bothered about proving their point rath-



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

er than ever trying to know the point of view of the other. Thus 'realization of our ignorance' is an extremely important step in the path of getting knowledge. This realization needs to be very deep, intense and enveloping. A half hearted realization is no realization, it needs to be complete & intense. In fact a half hearted realization is more of a problem than a door to any solution. Any pursuit of knowledge with a half-hearted realization of ignorance is more of an ego-trip, another way of getting some ego-fulfillment, rather than for the transcending and effacement of the very ego.

Realization of the fact that 'I do not know' is a



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

very humbling experience. It implies that none of my knowledge so far has been of any help. We all get various experiences, knowledge & wisdom while going through the ups & downs of life. We also get lots of knowledge by studying, observing & watching the wise people around. However, as the saying goes, the test of the pudding is in the eating, and when it comes to that our realm of existence is enough proof of the fact that nothing has been of any help. Real knowledge is all about transcending the very realm of time & space, and thus awakening to that which is timeless, and realizing it as our very self. If this has not happened then have no notions that your knowledge has been



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

of any help. Knowledge as a means of earning your livelihood is only for the eternally condemned seekers. Real knowledge is not for learning the art of putting balm on our imaginary wounds, but for realizing that there is no need to seek and treat. It is about discovering our divinity & timelessness. It is that knowledge alone which is in discussion here. Either we have that knowledge or we dont. If we dont, then let it be a complete, and unfettered realization. Let this sincere and factual realization that 'I do not know', be very deep. Let it envelop you. Assimilate this fact first, and this alone opens the door to all knowledge. Let this awareness touch your heart & soul, let it shake



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

you up, let it shatter you, let it make you truly humble. Let this awareness break our ego, let it make us realize that nothing has been of any help so far. Let it be instrumental to make us free from all that has been known till now. The Kena Upanishad says that 'Know the truth to be that which is neither in the realm of known nor that which is completely unknown.' That which is known is all of the realm of 'seen', while here we are interested in the truth of the seer.

Anyone even with the basic knowledge of vedanta knows that the problem of ignorance & knowledge is best highlighted with the exam-



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

ple of the rope & snake. Not knowing a rope as a rope someone imagined it to be a snake, and this notion of it being a snake further veils the rope. Now, if someone wishes to know the rope as the rope, then the basic requirement is that he or she needs to stop looking at it as a snake. Once the mis-apprehension is removed then alone the path is paved for the realization of its truth. To conclude a dimly lit snake like object to be a snake, is projection based on our existing 'knowledge base'. Someone who is from a different land where there are no snakes, will not imagine that dimly lit object to be a snake, but maybe something else which is most near the object in his memory bank. Any



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

erroneous perception inevitably brings about a condition of the shattering of our expectations, for the simple reason that the object was something else. Not knowing the rope as a rope is not directly a matter of pain & grief, but it is only the subsequent mis-apprehension which brings such grief-baggage with it. In another words mis-apprehension is all about believing too much in our existing knowledge, to the extent that we dont even bother to get valid knowledge, but come to conclusions, even before any proper enquiry & investigation. Till the time we continue to value our existing knowledge in such a way till then the veil of darkness only gets denser. To get knowledge of



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

the truth of any object, the first requirement is to contain our power of imagination, the so called Vikshepa Shakti. The avarana or the basic ignorance of not knowing a thing gets removed only when we don't complicate the scene with our additional imaginations. This is where the deep 'realization of our ignorance' helps. It stops projections. In fact it negates projections, and thus paves the way to know a thing to be as it is.

It is only when we know that we do not know that there is necessity to go & seek the knowledge. Only when there is realization of our ignorance that the ego is shattered, the pro-



REALIZING & ASSIMILATING IGNORANCE

jections stop, and there is a deep heart-felt humility to learn. All kinds of good values start getting manifested in such a person. Thus before we even begin our pursuit of self-realization, let there be a sincere and truthful realization of our own ignorance. Realize it, assimilate it, boldly accept this fact. Don't react negatively to it too. Negative reaction to the realization of our ignorance is indicative of only a partial & conditional realization of our ignorance. It is this true & deep realization of ignorance which makes us a true student. So just learn to accept a fact boldly and then go about boldly handling the problem.



OM BASED MEDITATION

Using 'Om' in Pranayama :

All the Vedas unanimously sing the glories of Om. So powerful & pregnant is this mantra that none of the rishis had any doubt or second thought to give the highest possible place to this great mantra. Om is literally taken as

OM BASED MEDITATION

‘Brahman’ itself. We use some word to point to the ultimate transcendental timeless reality, like I used the word Brahman. There are many other words too which are used to point to that divinity, however every word has some limitation, none of the words can be said to be as divine & perfect as the truth itself. This place is reserved just for Om. It is the most perfect name of the truth, and many Upanishads have devoted substantial place to this mantra.

Mandukya Upanishad is completely devoted to explaining this mantra alone. It gives out in details the secrets of the pregnant significances & secrets of Om. Taittiriya, Mundaka, Ka-

OM BASED MEDITATION

tha, Prashna, Brihadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads also explain this mantra vividly. Thus all those who follow the path revealed by the Vedas, give a very important place to 'Om in their daily sadhana too. Make your upasana or meditation Om-centric. Use Om at all levels of your sadhana, so that this great mantra gets firmly impressed & imprinted in our hearts, and thus starts revealing its secrets to us. Remember the words of Upanishads that Om is God itself in word-form. It has all the powers & omniscience of God to bless, purify and enlighten us. Here I shall briefly reveal to you a package for your daily sadhana based on Om. We shall see how Om is used for Pranay-

OM BASED MEDITATION

ama, Dharana, Upasana, Dhyana and then for Atma-gyana and Samadhi. We plan to give you a series of three articles in which we shall reveal this entire package. In the first part of this article we shall see the use of Om for Pranayama, in the second we shall see how Om is used for Dharana and Upasana, and in the third & final part of this article we shall see how Om is used for Atma-Gyana and Samadhi. So now, the first part.

One should sit down, early morning, after having a nice sleep, early morning in a quiet place. You should preferably sit down crossed legs on an asana put on the ground. However,

OM BASED MEDITATION

if because of old age or any other problem, you cannot do so, then you can sit on a straight-backed chair. However, one should keep the back straight, with upright neck and head. The posture itself should reveal someone who is fully awake, and thus facilitate even further awakening.

Having sat down in such a posture, one should bring to mind the fact, that this is your personal appointment with God and yourself, so keep everything, however important it may be, aside. Just as we keep our slippers outside a temple, so also keep all your worldly thoughts & worries aside, and give out your best, whole-

OM BASED MEDITATION

heartedly, for Meditation. To the extent you do justice to meditation to that extent you will do better for fulfilling all your responsibilities and handling all your challenges & problems. So just relax. Remember that a treasure beyond your imagination, is lying within you to be realized and attained. So start with a prayerful mood that 'O God, please bless me to meditate properly so that I may become your good instrument, fulfill all my responsibilities in a nice way, and even realize you - the ultimate divinity.' Thereafter one should do some Pranayama.

Pranayama is the art & science of channelising & optimizing your precious energy. It is

OM BASED MEDITATION

basically breathing based. There are three parts in any pranayama - puraka, kumbhaka and rechaka, meaning inhaling, retaining and exhaling. There are some initial practices of pranayama, like, bhasrika, kapal-bhati and anuloma-viloma. All these just prepare us for the real pranayama, and really speaking do not constitute the real pranayama. Real pranayama is to control the rechaka and puraka in such a way that you extend the kumbhaka time. Kumbhaka is retention, and it is basically of two kinds, bahya and antar. The first is to exhale and then retain the empty lung position for some time, and the second is to inhale and then retain the full-lung position. Both these are very potent

OM BASED MEDITATION

states of lung. To the extent we fully exhale to that extent we get the best results out of all the later stages of pranayama. Here alone we use Om. Chant Om in a longish way, in one breath, till you exhale all the air out of your lungs. One needs to start this chant loudly which slowly fades off. When chanting Om in such a way, feel that the entire area is getting blessed & purified. Each cell of your body is getting enlivened and charged. All impurities in that entire area, including evil spirits, are removed. Having emptied your lungs, retain the 'empty-lung' position for as long as it is comfortable to you, and then slowly inhale, to your full-lung capacity. Then again retain the full-

OM BASED MEDITATION

lung position for so long as it is comfortable, and then again chant Om, to exhale fully. This long-chant of Om is called as Udgitha Pranayama, and is central to all pranayama. In fact all preparatory steps lead to this stage alone. This pranayama, not only involves all the benefits of the nama-japa, chanting of the name of god, but also involves the best of pranayama. Such a person not only becomes a recipient of the blessings of God, but also has good health, and last but not the least a quiet, alert, and a thoughtful mind. This is the first use of Om in our daily meditation.

OM BASED MEDITATION

Using 'Om' for Dharana & Upasana :

In the last article on Meditation on OM we discussed the importance of this vedic meditation package. In the first stage we also saw how to use OM for the initial stages of meditation, i.e. in Pranayama. Mind & Prana are intimately connected. If we control one the other too gets simultaneously controlled. Thus the rishi's used pranayama to quieten & energize the mind. However, the quietening of the mind with pranayama is always a temporary phenomenon. The moment the effect of pranayama wanes, then the mind is back to its own mad rushes. Ramana Maharishi compares

OM BASED MEDITATION

the quietening of the mind with pranayama with keeping wild birds in a net. As long as the net is there they are quiet, the moment the net is removed they again fly off. However, it is a very helpful initial step to temporarily quieten the mind. Anyone who has practiced this shall see a very evident difference in his or her state of the mind. Lot of vacillations would have stopped, and you will experience an appreciable increase in the energy level too. Now in this article we shall see how OM is used for Dharana and Upasana.

Dharana is one of the steps of Ashtanga Yoga, and deals with the focusing of the mind on

OM BASED MEDITATION

one object. It is basically concentration. We need to focus our mind steadily on something to practice Dharana. Fixation of mind on one thing is a quality which manifests latent qualities of mind. Please understand that concentration is not meditation. While concentration is simply our capacity to focus attentively on any one object, meditation is awakening to our real self, and then just consciously 'being' that to the exclusion of all other thoughts. Meditation is awareful, silent, awakening.

Normally we use some external form for practicing Dharana. Initially external form is helpful too. So initially we just use this special OM

OM BASED MEDITATION

mantra written on something in front of us, but subsequently we need to use a 'sound' object rather than a 'form' object. Sound is more subtler than a form, so this sadhana is certainly more helpful. Subtler the object of our attention, subtler shall the mind become. So we chant OM, and then focus our attention just on the wave-like sound syllable. It slowly rises like a wave, and then slowly wanes out like a wave. This sound syllable alone needs to become the object for practicing Dharana. We should not mentally see OM written on something, but merely be conscious of the sound (Shabda). One should try to be fully sensitive to the sound. Focus on the sound, be fully

OM BASED MEDITATION

conscious of the sound, be blessed to hear the divine sound. Be steady on this, without any wavering. This is Dharana.

Once someone has practiced Dharana on OM, and has been blessed by a focused, steady, sensitive & an attentive mind, then that sadhaka needs to do 'Upasana' of OM. Upasana is a sadhana which not only involves focusing our attention on something, but there is emotional involvement & its upliftment too. Practice of concentration doesn't require emotional involvement, it is more of a practice. For Upasana we take any manifestation of God, and then using this as an instrument we invoke & pour

OM BASED MEDITATION

out our 'feelings' for God. God has both personal & impersonal dimensions, for upasana we need to take some personal form, which is not only 'perceptible' but is also very inspiring, and with which we see ourself as intimately related. Ishwara or Sopadhika Brahman is an embodiment of God is omniscient, omnipotent & omnipresent. Brahman wielding his divine Maya shakti alone creates, sustains and then then later dissolves the world. He alone is the self of all, he is the truth of all, he resides in all as their very self, so any of his manifestation which can be perceived and which has been revealed by the scriptures should be taken for the purpose of upasana.

OM BASED MEDITATION

Out of the many 'objects' which are taken for upasana, OM stands right on the top for upasana. Here when we chant the mantra OM, we 'see' & feel' it as the very manifestation of Ishwara. OM is Shabda-Brahman. Brahman manifested as Shabda or sound. It should be seen in that way. Imagine that God has given you darshan, he has presented himself in front of you. How would you see him? What will be your emotions? You will obviously be on top of the world with unimaginable ecstasy & joy. You will feel blessed thoroughly. Just being in front of him would be a matter of unspeakable joy. You will an embodiment of bliss. You will learn to be in the presence of someone who is

OM BASED MEDITATION

omniscient etc. You will see what does it mean to be truly blessed & contented. It will be a blissful silence. There will be no thoughts, you will not be conscious of anything else, neither will you be conscious of yourself. The thought & emotion of God would have enveloped & overpowered everything else. Let such emotions rise, then just 'be' in that state, and let all your worries, anxieties etc drop & disappear. You will come back a relieved, charged and an inspired person. The qualities of Ishwara would have touched you so deeply that their fragrance would linger in your mind, and soon become a part of your mind. So in the Upasana of OM, we don't take any other form of God, just this

OM BASED MEDITATION

sound, which has been sung so gloriously in so many Upanishads. This sound is enough for our 'take-off' into an emotionally charged & inspiring state of mind.

Anyone who regularly does upasana is a very blessed, quiet, peaceful, sensitive & and also an intelligent person. That person is basically a sattwic person now. Selfless, loving and inspired. Thus proper use of OM helps us to awake to such a state of mind. However, the OM-package of meditation has far more potential to take us to still greater heights, rather to the ultimate height. That we shall see in the next & final part of this article series.

OM BASED MEDITATION

Using ‘Om’ for Self-Enquiry & Samadhi;

In the last two articles on ‘Meditation on OM’ we saw how OM is used for Pranayama, and then for Dharana and Upasana. Now in this article we shall see how OM is used for Self-Enquiry and Samadhi.

Looking upon Om as God himself helps us to invoke deep devotion & a feeling of profound blessedness. However great this blessedness is, as long as we see God as separate from us - it is ignorance. If God pervades everything, then how can ‘I’ remain like an untouched island in an ocean of all-pervasive divinity. He

OM BASED MEDITATION

who sees God as something who is different from his or her self knows not what God is. If God is the truth of all, if he is timeless, eternal and infinite then he needs to be the truth of everything that is. He should necessarily be my 'self' too. In fact I cannot not have any existence apart from God. My isolated limited & fragmented individuality has to be nothing about an illusion, a figment of my imagination. Not only logic says so, but all the scriptures unanimously thunder such vision of total identity & non-duality. All the Mahavakya's declare total identity, and say That Thou Art. If this be so, then devotion unto God should help us turn to Self-Enquiry and Self-Knowledge. Rishi's

OM BASED MEDITATION

used this great mantra for this purpose also. In this article we shall see how this self-enquiry is done with the help of Om.

The Upanishads declare that Atma is Brahman, and also that Om is Brahman. Thus the implication is clear, that Om represents our Atma too - our real Self. To know the truth of our Self, we need to get a proper insight into the truth of Om. Om represents our complete existence - manifest or unmanifest, immanent or transcendental. To know the real truth of ourself we need to look at our complete existence - holistically, and not just the fragmented, partial, & vague truth of one state. Whoever

OM BASED MEDITATION

discerns his or her truth on the basis of just one state, that person alone begins his or her life in delusion, and when the fundamental premise is wrong all calculations go haywire. Something always appears to be missing & lacking. So we need to look at our self holistically, into our complete existence.

Our complete existence encompasses our three states of existence. The waking, dream and the deep-sleep states. All these are 'my' states, I am in all of them, so my real truth should be seen in all the states where I am, and I exist. Today, my perceptions about myself are on the basis of what I see myself to be in just one state,

OM BASED MEDITATION

i.e. the waking state. Even here we do not take all the different facets of our personality into consideration, but define ourself on the basis of what I prefer to see. Our identity today is more of a matter of my choice rather than a matter of fact. Having limited ourself we aspire to attain the limitless fulfillment, and thus go round & round in a never ending circles, and in the process end up more deep into the mire of limitations & suffocation. To break this shell of limited existence and then to spread our wings to fly in the infinite sky, we need to take the call of having a re-look into our self. The Upanishads give us a model of enquiry. They reveal that your existence is not merely

OM BASED MEDITATION

confined to the waking state, but 'I' am in the dream and deep-sleep state too. The 'I' with which we associate ourself with is not seen in the dream state, neither it is there in the deep-sleep state, yet I exist there too. This enquiry is called 'Avastha-traya Viveka', and it is this viveka which is revealed in the Om too.

Om is made up of three alphabets (called maatras), they are Aa, U and Ma. These three combine to form the word Om, because as per the sanskrit grammar, whenever A is followed by U, then it gets converted to O. These three maatras represent our three states of existence, the waking, dream and the deep-sleep. Our life

OM BASED MEDITATION

goes on cyclically from one to another, and then the cycle re-starts endlessly, till we exist. Each of these three states is a great blessing, and we have tons of literature on the importance & blessing of every state. Aa represents our waking state, U the dream state and Ma the deep-sleep state. Waking is defined as a state where we wield our sense organs in order to experience objects, dream is the state where we see & experience objects only with our mind, and deep-sleep is the state where our mind goes into the unmanifest state, called laya. In waking our faculties are fully bloomed, in dream they are partially manifest, whereas in the deep-sleep all our faculties too are asleep. In waking we have both

OM BASED MEDITATION

the sense of doership and the enjoyership, in the dream we just have the enjoyership, whilst in the deep-sleep state there is none. Thus not only the field of our experiences vary but even our identity varies. The 'I' which exists in the waking state is called as Viswa, in the waking state the unique identity is referred to as Taijasa, and in the Ma state as Pragnya. Every word indicates a different object, so also here, each of these identities are exclusive and unique. What the one is, the other is not, and the interesting thing is that 'I' alone am all these. These are my states of existence, this is a picture revealing my complete existence. Our identity needs to take all these facts into consideration before

OM BASED MEDITATION

we dare to define ourselves. All these identities are not only exclusive, but mutually exclusive too, when one comes the other is displaced. When we endeavor to define ourself on the basis of all these three states, then we see that we cannot hold on to any of the identity, because that identity is not something steady, it gets negated the very moment when I enter the next state. I am that which pervades all these three states like a thread which pervades all the different flowers in a garland. Enquiry into that common denominator reveals that, that thread is just the self-effulgent, blissful, existence (Sat-Chit-Ananda). This alone is our real self, because this alone is seen wherever &

OM BASED MEDITATION

whenever 'I' exist. Everything else is negated & displaced. Om reveals to us that 'I' am not the so-n-so individual but pure infinite Sat-Chit-Ananda. One who sees that which pervades all the three states, yet exists when the states are not knows the truth of his or her self. Such a person may be in the waking state, yet he or she is not technically in the waking or any of the other three states. The state of such a person is referred to as the fourth state (Turiya).

This Turiya state is represented in Om as the 'A-Maatra'. When we chant Om, we start with silence, and when the chant stops we have silence once again. This silence is called

OM BASED MEDITATION

‘A-maatra’, that which is not an alphabet. This is also part of Om, Om encompasses all - the manifest and the unmanifest, the all-pervasive and that which transcends all. This A-Maatra symbolizes the very basis of all states of existence. That which existed before this cycle starts, that unto which all the states finally merge back. This is the transcendental Brahman. That alone Thou Art, reveals the Om.

One who has awakened to this realm & truth is the enlightened one, the state of mind of such a person is the real essence of Samadhi too. Om becomes a great facilitator to practice samadhi. Chat Om in a longish way, and



OM BASED MEDITATION

then become conscious of the thread which not only pervades all the three states, but even transcends them. See and own up yourself as that and that alone. One needs to own up this divine identity as nicely as we have owned up our present identity, and then alone the human life will be seen as a blessing.





Vedanta Ashram

www.vmission.org.in

E mail : vmission@gmail.com